

CHAPTER TWO

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Introduction

This EIS studies three alternatives for possible changes to height and density regulations within portions of the Downtown Urban Center, plus a No Action Alternative. These changes, if adopted, would influence the maximum height and size of future building projects allowed in the Commercial Core, Denny Triangle and an edge of Belltown. None of the alternatives have been chosen as a preferred alternative. Rather, this EIS is intended to analyze the impact implications of alternative courses of action, for the benefit of decisionmakers, agencies and interested citizens.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The following are general objectives of the alternatives studied in this EIS.

- Designate adequate zoned development capacity in the Downtown Urban Center to encourage long-term residential and commercial growth and economic development in a manner consistent with Downtown's position as the largest urban center in the metropolitan area.
- Define regulatory requirements that will encourage development consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plans, and will support Downtown's vibrant urban character. Make changes that will aid in realizing a mix of low, moderate and market rate affordable housing throughout Downtown, particularly in areas intended to be "residential enclaves."
- Study possible changes to height and density regulations in selected Commercial Core (particularly Office Core zones), Denny Triangle and Belltown portions of Downtown.
- Determine how to best accommodate growth while maintaining a functional transportation system, including the street network, transit, and non-motorized modes of travel. Similarly, determine how to best accommodate growth while maintaining the function and capacity of utility systems, including but not limited to electrical energy, water, sewer and stormdrain systems.
- Achieve a high quality urban environment that can accommodate high-density development while ensuring livability and enhancing Downtown's positive existing characteristics.

All of the Alternatives analyzed provide sufficient development capacity to accommodate the next 20 years of projected growth. The various actions proposed under any of the Alternatives are not expected to influence the amount of growth occurring in the affected area within this timeframe. The proposed changes may influence the distribution of growth within the study area and the character of development that accommodates it, and these conditions are analyzed in this EIS to help decisionmakers evaluate different approaches to managing the next 20 years of Downtown growth.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The regulatory context of Downtown includes its Urban Center designation, the City's Comprehensive Plan (and relationship to State growth management requirements), neighborhood plans, land use policies, the Land Use Code and other procedural requirements such as master use permits and design review.

The City's **Comprehensive Plan**, "*Toward a Sustainable Seattle*," is a 20-year policy plan completed in 1994 that articulates a vision of how Seattle will grow. The Comprehensive Plan makes policy choices and provides a flexible framework for adapting to real conditions over time. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes an "urban village" strategy seeking to promote and reinforce the pattern of residential and employment growth in larger urban centers and several smaller "urban village" neighborhood districts spread throughout the city. The Plan includes 20-year growth targets for the urban centers and villages. The Comprehensive Plan satisfies requirements of the State's Growth Management Act and fits within King County's framework of Countywide Planning Policies. The Urban Center designation for Downtown is part of the regional growth strategy outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies calling for the concentration of a significant share of the region's employment and housing growth within a limited number of urban centers linked together by high capacity transit. In addition, the City's Comprehensive Plan includes numerous **Land Use Policies** that help define the basis for the City's zoning and Land Use Code regulations.

Following adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan, approximately 37 **neighborhood plans** were prepared through the Neighborhood Planning Office to address future conditions in subareas in and around urban centers and villages. Within Downtown, five neighborhood plans were prepared for Belltown, Denny Triangle, Commercial Core, Chinatown/International District, and Pioneer Square. Also, an overall plan addressing the entire Downtown Urban Center was prepared. The alternatives in this EIS include actions to implement recommendations included in these neighborhood plans.

The **Land Use Code** contains extensive land use and zoning regulations addressing the various zones within the City, including several distinct zones defined for Downtown. The Land Use Code defines numerous requirements for future development, such as setbacks, allowable heights and densities, and parking requirements to name a few. Applications for development are reviewed through the City's Master Use Permit (MUP) process, and often go through the "design review" process that provides for public input and City input on how a development is designed, with the intent of improving overall design quality.

Certain other land use regulatory concepts are defined within the Code, such as "transfer of development rights" (TDR), bonus features, and "transfer of development credits" (TDC). These are concepts that allow for some flexibility in the amount of development that can occur in different Downtown locations.

- ***TDRs*** allow transfer of unused portions of allowable density from one property to another. TDRs can help preserve desirable features such as landmark structures, affordable housing, and public open space that otherwise might be threatened by redevelopment.
- ***Bonus features*** allow additional height or density to be obtained if a developer provides features or amenities that have public benefit or offset impacts.
- ***TDC*** is a program that allows a developer to purchase development rights from rural lands in King County to gain additional density in portions of Downtown, to aid in preservation of rural land and accommodate more residential growth in Downtown.

Several sections in Chapter 3 and selected appendices further discuss the alternatives' relationship to plans and policies.

BACKGROUND

The proposal to consider changes to zoned height and density arises from neighborhood plans for the Denny Triangle and Commercial Core neighborhoods, as well as the overall urban center plan prepared by the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group (DUCPG). These plans contain visions, goals, policies and action recommendations to achieve the vision for future growth in the Downtown Urban Center. All

of the plans include objectives of promoting vibrant, diverse mixed-use neighborhoods containing housing for households of all income ranges, as well as objectives for open space, urban design character, transportation and other matters. These plans recommend changes to zoning and land use regulations to promote their objectives.

The Commercial Core, Denny Triangle and DUCPG plans all included proposals for increasing the capacity of the Downtown area, intended to accommodate further employment and residential growth, stimulate residential development and provide resources for affordable housing. To implement these proposals, major revisions to the incentive zoning Downtown were recommended, including an overhaul of the bonus and TDR programs to reprioritize their focus on achieving housing goals. In the Commercial Core Plan, interim height and density increases through a "super bonus" were also proposed to capture opportunities for increasing development density and the use of incentives during the economic boom underway at the time. Permanent height increases were also proposed to promote less bulky development and achieve other urban design objectives. The Denny Triangle Plan included recommendations for permanent height and density increases for all zones in that neighborhood.

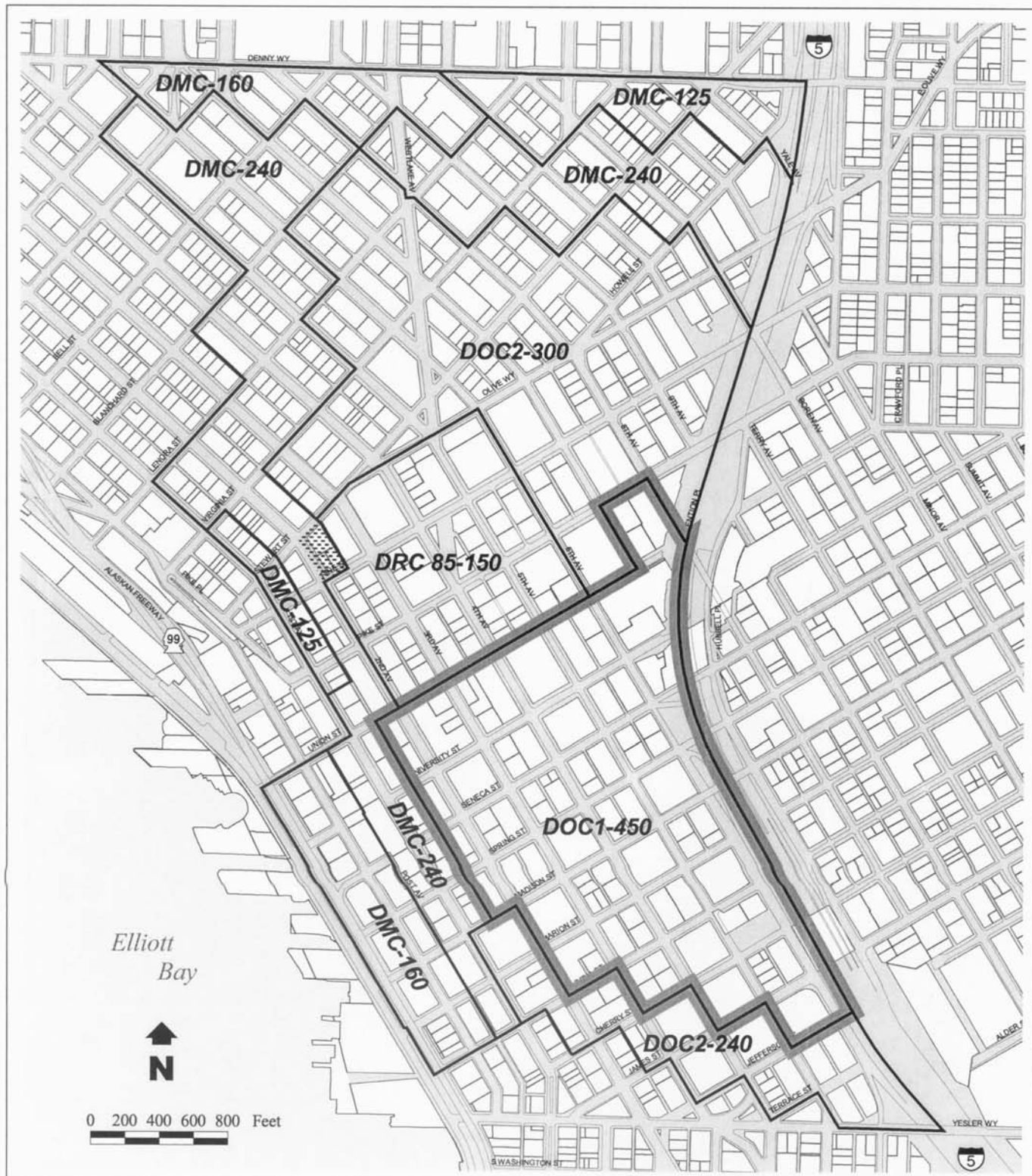
Immediately following the City Council's approval of the Downtown neighborhood plans in early 1999, a limited number of proposals were implemented through revisions to the Land Use Code, including:

- expanding the use of TDR to allow mixed-income structures including low- and low-moderate income housing to qualify as TDR sending sites;
- removing some density restrictions on residential use in the DOC 1 zone;
- rezoning portions of Pioneer Square and the northwest corner of the retail core to promote mixed use development; and
- amending the Pioneer Square Preservation District provisions to better promote neighborhood development objectives.

The locations where these changes apply are shown on Figure 2.

In November of 1999, the City enacted the Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program in the Denny Triangle to allow height and density increases as an incentive for residential development. The TDC program allows up to a 30 percent increase above mapped height limits for residential and mixed-use projects that purchase conservation credits from rural properties in King County and contribute to an amenity credit fund for open space and Green Street improvements consistent with the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan. The program also establishes a partnership with King County for ongoing public investment in amenities in the area, in conjunction with the purchase of development credits by private developers. Also as part of the TDC legislation, an area of approximately 4.5 acres adjacent to the office core zoned Downtown Mixed Commercial 240 (DMC 240) was rezoned to Downtown Office Core 2 300' (DOC 2 300') to expand the office core and increase capacity for commercial development. Figure 3 shows the areas affected by these changes.

As part of the City's ongoing neighborhood plan implementation activities in 2000 and 2001, City staff met frequently with an advisory committee of Downtown stakeholders to discuss regulatory changes that would further support and foster the types of changes advocated by the neighborhood plans. As a result of this work, additional proposals for addressing height and density increases were recommended for further consideration. These proposals were documented in a report entitled, "City of Seattle TDR/Bonus Program Review Advisory Committee Recommendations," dated May 31, 2000.



CHANGES IMPLEMENTED FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF DUCPG PLAN February 1999

FIGURE 2

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City of Seattle
May 17, 2002

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Denny Triangle TDC Area: 30% height increase above existing mapped limits (and additional 37.5' and 90' depending on zone) for mixed use and residential projects

 Rezone Area: Approximately 5.5 acres of DMC-240 rezoned to DOC2-300

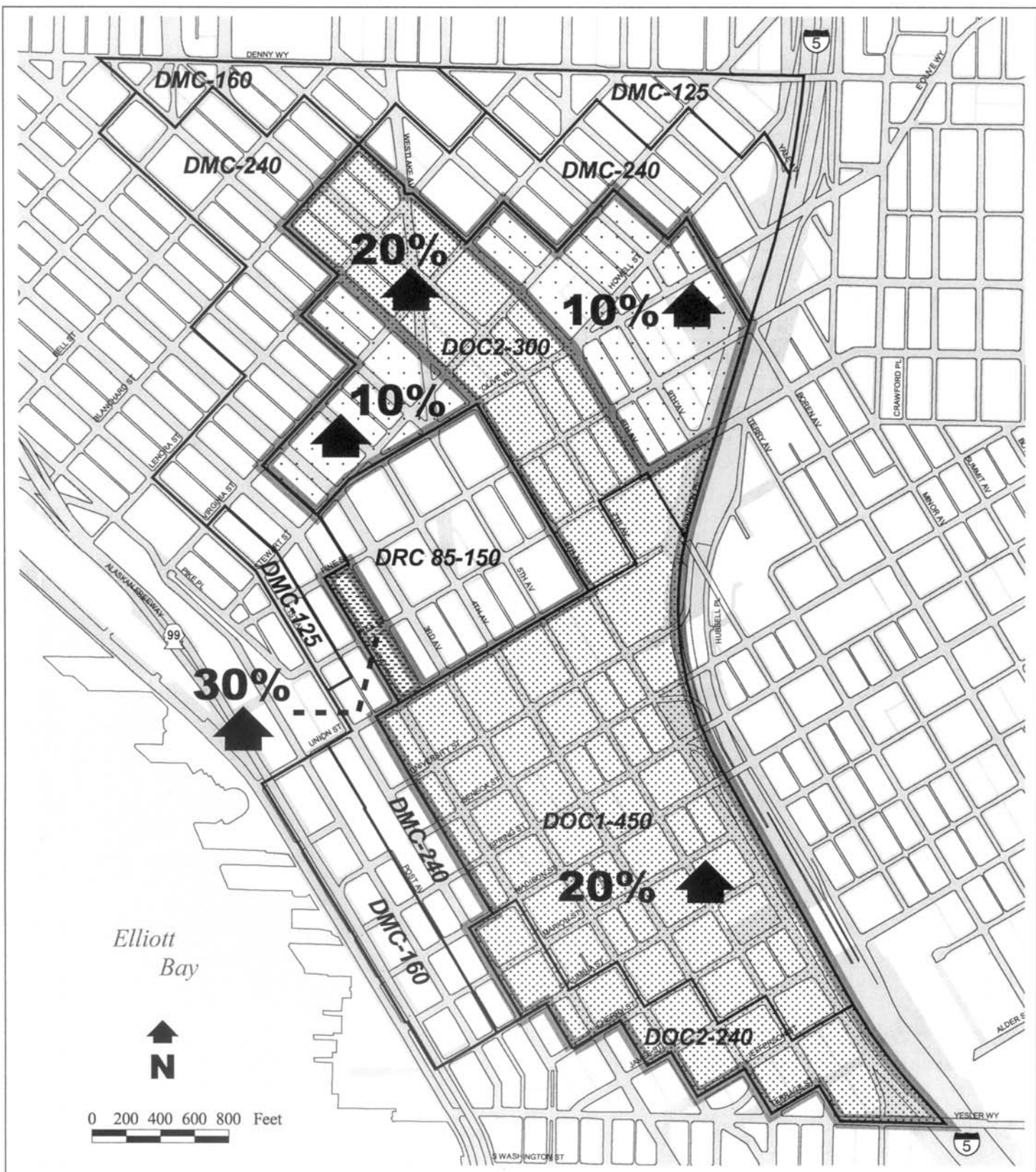
Upon reviewing the breadth of these requested changes, the decision was made to first pursue revisions to the bonus and TDR provisions of the Downtown incentive zoning, within the context of the existing maximum density limits. Because this set of changes did not substantively change the permitted density or location of future development, environmental review proceeded with expeditious review and issuance of a Determination of Non-Significance. In July 2001, the City Council adopted revisions to the bonus and TDR provisions, as well as: 1) related increases to the base FAR limits in the office core (DOC 1 and DOC 2) and retail core (DRC) zones; 2) allowances for increasing height by 10 or 20 percent, without any increase in permitted density, in specified areas of the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones; and 3) limited adjustments to height and bonus provisions in the DRC retail core zone (see Figure 4).

Proposals for increasing maximum density limits and height limits are a second set of actions now proceeding through the SEPA process to assess potential adverse impacts on the Downtown area. On May 3rd, 2001, the Strategic Planning Office issued a Determination of Significance indicating that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared for this proposal. In preparation for this EIS, City staff examined the neighborhood plans and advisory committee recommendations, considered the input from interest groups and citizens during the EIS scoping process, and defined alternatives that cover a range of possible actions. One of these alternatives includes proposed regulatory changes that collectively represent the maximum extent (“high-end”) of changes requested by the neighborhood plans, as well as additional recommendations made by a citizen advisory committee convened to guide the development of proposals undertaken in the first phase. The other alternatives include a No Action Alternative, and two intermediate alternatives defining different options for height and density changes that could support the City’s and neighborhoods’ goals.

City staff conducted a “scoping” period for this EIS, to receive public comments about EIS study topics and definition of alternatives. Several citizens and groups submitted written and verbal comments during the scoping period. A formal scoping meeting was held on May 23rd, 2001, and a general forum summarizing Downtown planning activities was held on May 16th, 2001. These comments were considered in defining the alternatives and elements of the environment studied in this EIS.

Location of Proposal

The proposal affects portions of the Downtown area generally bounded by Denny Way, Interstate 5, Yesler Way, Alaskan Way, as well as Lenora Street and 5th Avenue in the Belltown vicinity (refer to Figure 1). The areas most affected by the proposal include the following zones: Downtown Office Core (DOC 1 and DOC 2), and Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC). While the proposals are primarily focused on the Commercial Core and Denny Triangle neighborhoods, edges of the Belltown neighborhood zoned DMC 240’ and DOC 2 300’ are also included in the study area. No changes are proposed to the Downtown retail core (DRC) zone in any of the alternatives.



CHANGES IMPLEMENTED WITH ADOPTION OF REVISED BONUS/TDR PROVISIONS July 2001

FIGURE 4

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..... 10% Height Increase in Portions of DOC2-300

20% Height Increase in DOC1 and Portions of DOC2

30% Height Increase on Western Edge of Retail Core (DRC)

Base density limit increased by 1.0 FAR in DOC1 and DOC2 and 0.5 FAR in DRC.

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Description of Alternatives

This EIS examines a total of four alternatives that cover a range of possible actions. Three of the alternatives consist of different sets of changes in allowable maximum height and density of development (measured by floor area) in several Downtown zones. Alternative 4—the “No Action” Alternative—is also included to assess what is likely to occur over time if no changes are made to the Land Use Code. This "baseline" alternative assumes that projected development will occur under the height and density limits that now apply (including July 2001 amendments) to accommodate changes to the bonus and TDR provisions that apply to zones in the study area. A summary and comparison of the alternatives is provided in Table 5 on page 2-23.

For all of the Alternatives, the same amount of residential and commercial growth is assumed to occur within the study area over the 20-year planning horizon. This amount, approximately 63,000 additional jobs and 7,350 additional residential units, represents a relatively high forecast of 20-year growth. Preliminary economic analysis indicated that this level of growth could be accommodated under existing zoning conditions, and that changes to zoning would not alter the demand for residential and commercial space generating the growth. Consequently, even though the actions proposed in different alternatives may add capacity for future growth, the actual demand for additional commercial space and residential units is expected to be the same for the 20-year study period. Therefore, the differences between alternatives are not in the overall amount of growth accommodated, but rather in how the same amount of growth may be accommodated differently in terms of the number, size, location and type of projects required.

ALTERNATIVE 1 – HIGH END HEIGHT AND DENSITY INCREASE

Overview

Alternative 1 is a composite of the initial recommendations for height and density increases included in Downtown neighborhood plans, supplemented by later recommendations from the Bonus/TDR Advisory Committee. As such, it represents the higher-end of possible changes to height and density, related to concepts from the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan (refer to Figure 2) and the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan (refer to Figure 3), with the support of the DUCPG Downtown Urban Center Plan. It also includes recommendations from the TDR/Bonus Program Review Advisory Committee for consideration of additional changes (not from neighborhood plans) on the edges of Belltown and within the Commercial Core neighborhood (refer to Figure 4). The primary intent of proposals for increasing height and density limits is to: 1) provide sufficient zoned capacity to accommodate continued residential and employment growth Downtown, 2) stimulate housing production, and 3) provide resources to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Alternative 1 proposes the greatest magnitude of changes in height and density studied in this EIS, for areas including all of the Denny Triangle, most of the Commercial Core, and the southern and eastern edges of the Belltown neighborhood. Specific proposals from each of the sources of Alternative 1 are presented below. For the purposes of EIS analysis, those recommendations calling for the highest increases to height and density limits in an area were incorporated in this alternative.

Commercial Core. Both the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan and the DUCPG Downtown Urban Center Plan include a proposal for a "super bonus" that was intended to allow height and density increases during the peak of the last economic cycle as an incentive to stimulate housing production. As initially proposed, the super bonus concept would have applied on an interim basis in the DOC 1, DOC 2 and DMC 240 zones of the Commercial Core, allowing increases in the base and maximum floor area ratio (FAR) limits and a 30% height increase for projects including a specified housing incentive bonus package. Proposals for permanent changes to height controls in the Commercial Core Plan were limited

to increasing height limits by 20 to 25% in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones though a building height variance, while maintaining "current FAR provisions to control overall building bulk." This proposal was implemented as part of the legislation amending the Downtown bonus/TDR provisions adopted by Council in July 2001, and therefore is represented in Alternative 4: No Action. Proposals from the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan are presented on Figure 5.

Denny Triangle. The Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan calls for increasing height limits in all zones in that neighborhood by 100 feet. This Plan also includes proposals for specific increases to base and maximum FAR limits in the DOC 2 zone, with increases also to be considered in all DMC zones. The proposed increases were not linked to a super bonus and were intended to be permanent. The extent of the height increases, which in some areas represent an 80% increase above existing limits, and the intended purpose to increase capacity for both employment and residential development, would supplant the existing transfer of development credits (TDC) provisions, which only allow a 30% height increase and limit the incentive to residential and mixed-use developments. Proposals from the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan are presented on Figure 6.

Bonus/TDR Advisory Committee. The recommendations of the TDR/Bonus Program Review Advisory Committee included proposals for increasing height and density limits in the DOC 1, DOC 2 and DMC 240 zones, as called for in the Commercial Core "super bonus" proposal, but on a permanent rather than interim basis. Furthermore, increasing height and density limits was recommended throughout all DMC zones "consistent with requirements developed for other zones." The report, "Advisory Committee Recommendations," dated May 31, 2000 calls for consideration of the following increases to height and density limits:

- DOC 1 Zone: 2 FAR increase in base FAR and 3 FAR increase in Maximum FAR; 30% height increase.
- DOC 2 Zone: 2 FAR increase in base FAR and 3 FAR increase in Maximum FAR; 30% height increase (note: these are lower than recommendations in Denny Triangle Plan for DOC 2 zone in that neighborhood).
- DMC Zone: Consider increases in height and density throughout the DMC zones; for the area north of Union, not in Denny Triangle, consider mirroring TDC program features as the DMC zone is further considered for additional height/density consistent with requirements developed for other zones. (note: density increases not specified; does not address any changes to DMC zones in Denny Triangle).
- DRC Zone: 1 FAR increase in Base FAR; replace 85-foot height limits with 150-foot height limits; consider increase above 150 feet for housing only (up to 30% increase in height). (note: changes to height and density limits in the DRC Zone were implemented under previous legislation related to revisions to bonus/TDR bonus programs).
- DMR Zone: no change.

The location of these proposed changes are shown on Figure 7.



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May 20, 2002

Commercial Core Urban Center Village Boundary

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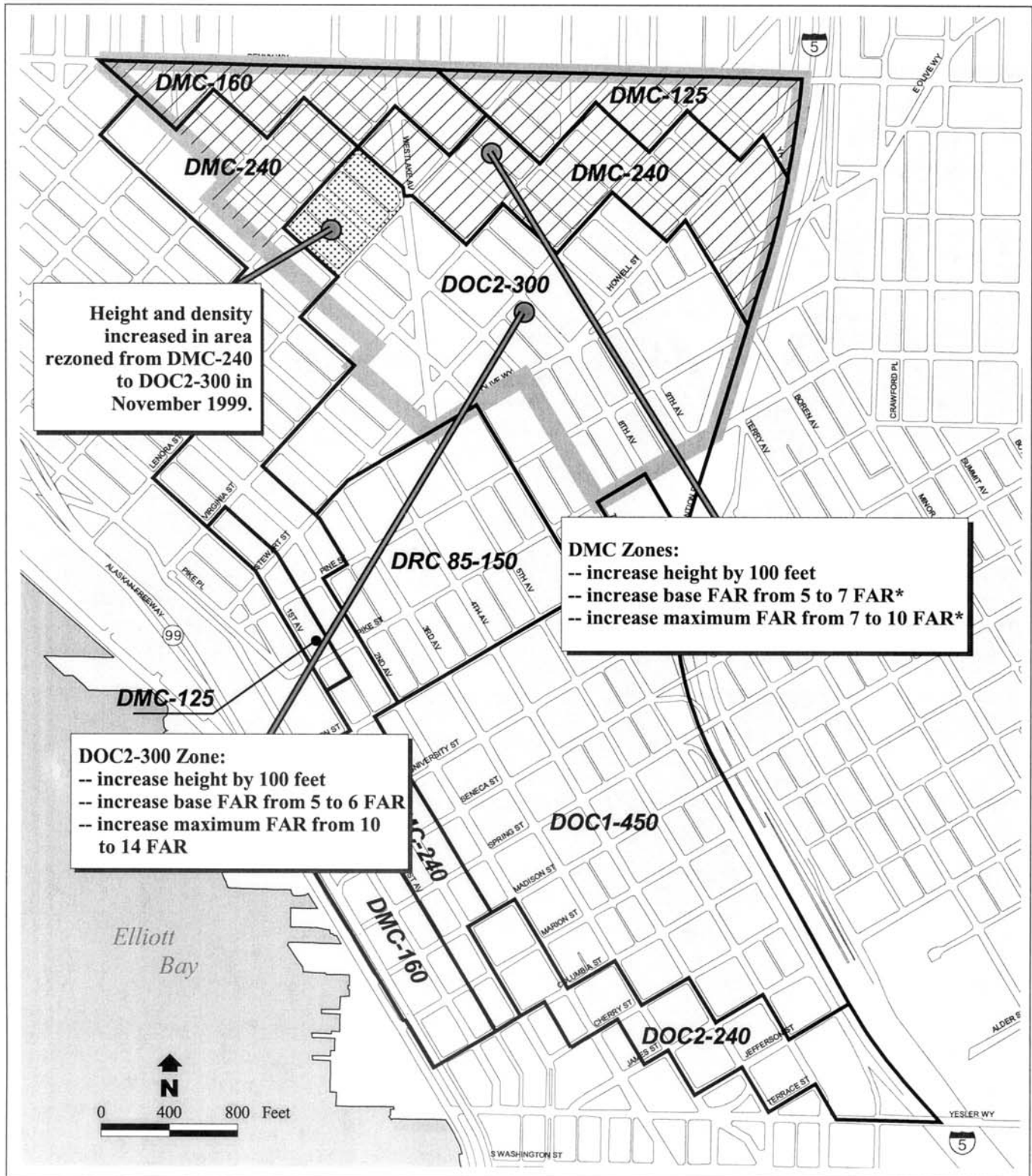


FIGURE 6

Height and Density Increases Recommended in DENNY TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



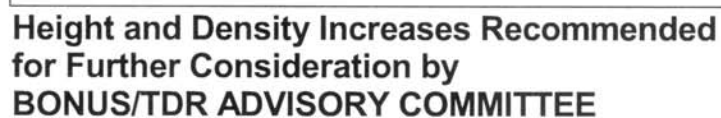
Denny Triangle Urban Center Village Boundary

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City of Seattle
May 20, 2002

*The Denny Triangle Plan does not provide a specific proposal for an increase to FAR limits in DMC zones. The 7 FAR base and 10 FAR maximum represent increases that are proportionately similar to those proposed in the Plan for the DOC2-300 zone.

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Alternative 1 Height and Density Changes

The proposed height and density changes in Alternative 1 would add 72-135 feet and 3-4 FAR (floor area ratio¹) to the office core zones, and would also extend similar increases to DMC zones across the rest of the Denny Triangle neighborhood south of Denny Way (see Figure 8). Given the existing height limits of 125-240 feet of zones in this area, the proposed heights would represent an increase of 40-80% in allowable heights; the proposed increases of 3-4 FAR would represent an increase of 30-43% in allowable density.

Alternative 1 also includes a proposal for a 30% increase in height and 3 FAR increase in density (over the existing 7 FAR) for the Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zones at the periphery of the office and retail cores. These areas include the southern edge of Belltown, the area east of the Pike Place Market, and the 1st Avenue and Western Avenue corridors. Existing height limits in these areas are 125 feet, 160 feet, and 240 feet.

Height: Within the affected area, maximum height limits would increase by:

- 135 feet in the central DOC 1 zone;
- 100 feet in all of the northern DOC 2 and DMC zones in the Denny Triangle;
- and 48 feet (30% increase) in the central DMC zones along 1st Avenue between Pike and Virginia Streets, and in the Western Avenue vicinity, respectively; and
- 72 feet (30% increase) in the southern DOC 2 zone, the DMC zone on the southern edge of Belltown and along 2nd Avenue on the western edge of the retail core, and the DMC zone along 1st Avenue between Union and Columbia, west of the central office core.

Density: The proposed density increases for this alternative would increase maximum FAR by 3 (additional floor area equal to three times the area of a given site) in most areas and by 4 in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone. Specific proposed density and height changes for the various zones are summarized on Table 2, below.

Bonus/TDR provisions. Under Alternative 1, all floor area above the new base FARs in the DOC 1, DOC 2 and DMC zones would be gained through bonuses and/or the transfer of development rights (TDR) according to a split that requires 75% of the additional floor area to be gained through affordable housing TDR, payment to an affordable housing/child care fund, and/or a bonus for providing affordable housing. The remaining 25% can be gained through other eligible bonuses or TDRs, including specified open space and on-site amenities, human services, open space TDR, variable scale TDR, and landmark TDR, within the limits and conditions prescribed in the Code. In the DMC zone, the current option to use the newly adopted bonuses and TDR provisions establishing the 25%/75% split, or to use the bonus options available prior to this amendment, would be eliminated. Also, the provision that now allows a wider range of bonus choices to be used to gain the first FAR above the base FAR in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones would be eliminated.

¹ Floor area ratio is a measure of allowable building density. On any given site, the FAR value multiplied by the site area is the total floor area allowed to be built. On a 10,000 square foot site, an FAR of 5 allows a 50,000 square foot building.



Alternative 1: High End Height and Density Increases (Downtown Neighborhood Plans and Advisory Committee Proposals)



0 2 4 6 8 10
SCALE IN 100 FEET

1. EXISTING OFFICE CORE
 - increase maximum FAR from 14 to 17
 - increase height limit from 450' to 585'
2. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/DENNY TRIANGLE
 - increase maximum FAR from 10 to 14
 - increase height limit from 300' to 400'
3. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/SOUTH DOWNTOWN
 - increase maximum FAR from 10 to 13
 - increase height limit from 240' to 312'
4. COMMERCIAL MIXED USE AREA/DENNY TRIANGLE
 - increase maximum FAR from 7 to 10
 - increase height limits by 100' (125' to 225', 160' to 260', 240' to 340')
5. COMMERCIAL MIXED USE AREA/SOUTH BELLTOWN AND COMMERCIAL CORE
 - increase maximum FAR from 7 to 10
 - increase height limits by 30% (125' to 165', 160' to 208', 240' to 312')

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Table 2
Alternative 1—High End Height and Density Increases

ID #	Location	Existing Zone	Maximum Density (FAR)		Maximum Height (feet)	
			Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
1	Commercial Core <i>Advisory Committee Recommendation as permanent action; Comm. Core and DUCPG Plan recommendation as interim "super bonus" proposal</i>	DOC 1 – 450'	14	17	450 ft.	585 ft.
2	Denny Triangle—office expansion area <i>Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan recommendations</i>	DOC 2 – 300'	10	14	300 ft.	400 ft.
3	Commercial Core—southern edge <i>Advisory Committee Recommendation as permanent action; Commercial Core and DUCPG Plan recommendation as interim "super bonus" proposal</i>	DOC 2 – 240'	10	13	240 ft.	312 ft.
4	Denny Triangle—mixed use area <i>Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan recommendations</i>	DMC – 125' DMC – 160' DMC – 240'	7 7 7	10* 10* 10*	125 ft. 160 ft. 240 ft.	225 ft. 260 ft. 340 ft.
5	Commercial Core—1st and 2nd Avenue Corridor <i>Advisory Committee Recommendation as permanent action; Commercial Core and DUCPG Plan recommendation as interim "super bonus" proposal</i>	DMC – 240'	7	10	240	312 ft.
6	Commercial Core—western edge, Belltown—southern and eastern edges <i>TDR/Bonus Advisory Committee Recommendation</i>	DMC – 125' DMC – 160' DMC – 240'	7 7 7	10 10 10	125 ft. 160 ft. 240 ft.	165 ft. 208 ft. 312 ft.

* The Denny Triangle Plan does not include a specific proposal for increase to maximum FAR in DMC zones; 10 FAR represents an increase that is proportionally similar to what the Plan proposes for the DOC 2 Zone.
TDC=Transfer of Development Credits. DOC=Downtown Office Core. DMC=Downtown Mixed Commercial.

ALTERNATIVE 2 – CONCENTRATED OFFICE CORE

Overview

Alternative 2 would limit height and density changes to the existing office core zones, DOC 1 and 2. Zoning would not change in the DMC zones peripheral to the office core, where it is desirable to balance residential and employment growth and maintain a gradual transition between the concentrated development intensity in the office core zones and surrounding neighborhoods of Belltown, the Harborfront, Pike/Pine and South Lake Union (see Figure 9). Height increases through the TDC program would still be possible, to provide height incentives for mixed-use and residential development in the

DMC zones of the Denny Triangle. However, the 100-foot height increase in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone would displace TDC provisions for height increases in that zone.

Alternative 2's theme is that greater height and density for office/commercial development is most preferable in central core areas where Downtown zoning favors high concentrations of development and there is sufficient infrastructure to accommodate growth. Within the office core zones of the Commercial Core, the proposed changes in height and maximum density are the same as for Alternative 1. In the Denny Triangle, the maximum density in the DOC 2 zone would increase by 3 FAR rather than the 4 FAR increase proposed in Alternative 1. The concentrated office core theme is similar to concepts of urban growth expressed in past Downtown land use planning, emphasizing continued concentration of higher-density employment growth and redevelopment within the existing DOC 1 core, with limited expansion into adjacent DOC 2 areas, primarily in the Denny Triangle.

Alternative 2 Height and Density Changes

Height: Within the affected area, maximum heights would increase by:

- 135 feet in the central DOC 1 zone;
- 100 feet in the northern DOC 2 zone; and
- 72 feet (30% increase) in the southern DOC 2 zone.

Density: The proposed density increases for Alternative 2 would increase maximum FAR by 3. However, no density changes would occur in the DMC zones in the Denny Triangle, Commercial Core or Belltown edge. Specific proposed density and height changes are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
Alternative 2—Concentrated Office Core

ID #	Location	Existing Zone	Maximum Density (FAR)		Maximum Height (feet)	
			Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
1	Commercial Core	DOC 1 – 450'	14	17	450 ft.	585 ft.
2	Denny Triangle—office expansion area	DOC 2 – 300'	10	13	300 ft.*	400 ft.
3	Commercial Core—southern edge	DOC 2 – 240'	10	13	240 ft.	312 ft.
4	Denny Triangle—mixed use area and Belltown—southern edge	DMC – 125'	7	7	125 ft.*	No change
		DMC – 160'	7	7	160 ft.*	No change
		DMC – 240'	7	7	240 ft.*	No change
5	Commercial Core—western edge	DMC – 125'	7	7	125 ft.	No change
		DMC – 160'	7	7	160 ft.	No change
		DMC – 240'	7	7	240 ft.	No change

Notes: *Height increases up to 30% above mapped height are allowed in the Denny Triangle through the TDC program. TDC = Transfer of Development Credits. FAR = floor area ratio. DOC = Downtown Office Core. DMC = Downtown Mixed Commercial.



Bonus/TDR provisions. Under Alternative 2, no changes to current base FARs are proposed. All floor area above the base FAR would be gained through bonuses and/or transfer of development rights (TDR) according to a split that requires 75% of the additional floor area to be gained through affordable housing TDR, payment to an affordable housing/child care fund, and/or a bonus for providing affordable housing. The remaining 25% can be gained through other eligible bonuses or TDRs, including specified open space and on-site amenities, human services, open space TDR, variable scale TDR, and landmark TDR, within the limits and conditions prescribed in the Code. In the DMC zone, the current option to use the newly adopted bonuses and TDR provisions establishing the 25%/75% split, or to use the bonus options available prior to this amendment, would be eliminated. Also, the provision that now allows a wider range of bonus choices to be used to gain the first FAR above the base FAR in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones would also be eliminated.

ALTERNATIVE 3 – RESIDENTIAL EMPHASIS

Overview

Alternative 3 places a greater emphasis on regulatory changes tailored to specific areas to help encourage provision of housing. This alternative's theme supports increased height and densities in the office core zones, but with transitions in development intensity provided by sub-areas of variable height and density limits in the DOC 2 zones in Belltown and the eastern portion of the Denny Triangle. While the TDC program would be displaced for a portion of the DOC 2 zone in the Denny Triangle allowing the greatest increase in commercial density, the program would continue to provide height incentives limited to housing and mixed use projects in other DOC 2 and DMC areas of the Denny Triangle (see Figure 10).

In Downtown areas peripheral to the office and retail core, maximum commercial densities would not increase, but would be reduced in some areas by rezoning to designations that promote residential development and limit commercial development. In addition to increasing residential capacity, the intent of regulatory changes in these peripheral areas is to provide zoning that will: 1) ensure a concentration of housing consistent with neighborhood plan objectives for creating "enclaves" of residential development in the north central portion of the Denny Triangle, 2) increase the emphasis on housing and promote a more compatible residential scale of development along the southern edge of Belltown to extend the predominantly residential character emerging throughout the rest of the neighborhood, and 3) encourage mixed uses by requiring housing in projects developed to maximum commercial density limits in other DMC zones within the study area. The latter objective would occur by making non-residential density (above the base density) contingent upon providing on-site housing.

Alternative 3 Height and Density Changes

Height: Within the affected area, maximum heights would increase by:

- 135 feet in the central DOC 1 zone;
- 100 feet in the portion of the DOC 2 zone in between 8th Avenue and 5th/6th Avenues; and
- 72 feet (30% increase) in the southern DOC 2 zone;

Density: In the DOC 1 and approximately half of the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone, the maximum density would increase by 3 FAR. In other portions of the DOC 2 zone, the maximum density would remain unchanged. Densities in DMC zones would not change, but portions of the DMC zone in north central Denny Triangle and the southern edge of Belltown would be rezoned from DMC to Downtown Mixed Residential/Commercial (DMR/C). With this zone, the maximum density would decrease from 7 to 4 or 5. This is summarized in Table 4.



FIGURE 10

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Alternative 3: Residential Emphasis

1. EXISTING OFFICE CORE
 - increase maximum FAR from 14 to 17
 - increase height limit from 450' to 585'
- 2a. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/DENNY TRIANGLE
 - increase maximum FAR from 10 to 13
 - increase height limit from 300' to 400'
- 2b. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/DENNY TRIANGLE
 - no change to maximum FAR of 10
 - no change: 300' height limit can be increased by 30% through TDC or by 10% under specified conditions
3. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/SOUTH DOWNTOWN
 - increase maximum FAR from 10 to 13
 - increase height limit from 240' to 312'
4. RESIDENTIAL MIXED USE AREA
 - rezone to DMR/C
 - maximum FAR reduced from 7 FAR to 4 or 5 FAR, depending on height limit
 - existing height limits retained (125', 160', 240'); 30% height increase allowed in Denny Triangle through TDC
5. COMMERCIAL MIXED USE AREA
 - maximum FAR remains 7 FAR, but increases above base 5 FAR requires that housing be included on-site.
 - existing height limits retained (125', 160', 240'); 30% height increase allowed in Denny Triangle through TDC

Faded text
No change from existing conditions

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Table 4
Alternative 3—Residential Emphasis

ID	Location	Existing Zone (zone change in bold)	Maximum Density (FAR)		Maximum Height (feet)	
			Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
1	Commercial core	DOC 1 – 450'	14	17	450 ft.	585 ft.
2a	Denny Triangle—office expansion, 5 th to 8 th	DOC 2 – 300'	10	13	300 ft.*	400 ft.
2b	Denny Triangle —office expansion, between 8 th and Boren	DOC 2 – 300'	10	10	300 ft.*	300 ft.*
	Belltown, office expansion, between 3 rd & 5 th and Olive and Virginia	DOC 2 – 300'	10	10	300 ft.	300 ft.
3	Commercial core—southern edge	DOC 2 – 240'	10	13	240 ft.	312 ft.
4a	Denny Triangle—mixed use area, roughly between Westlake, Howell, and Minor	DMC → DMR/C	7	4	125 ft.*	125 ft.*
		DMC → DMR/C	7	5	160 ft.*	160 ft.*
		DMC → DMR/C	7	5	240 ft.*	240 ft.*
5a	Belltown—southern edge	DMC → DMR/C	7	5	240 ft.*	240 ft.*
4b	Denny Triangle—mixed use areas west of Westlake, and near I-5	DMC – 125'	7	7**	125 ft.*	125 ft.*
		DMC – 160'	7	7**	160 ft.*	160 ft.*
		DMC – 240'	7	7**	240 ft.*	240 ft.*
5b	Commercial core—western edge	DMC – 125'	7	7**	125 ft.	125 ft.
		DMC – 160'	7	7**	160 ft.	160 ft.
		DMC – 240'	7	7**	240 ft.	240 ft.

Notes:

* Height increases up to 30% above mapped height are allowed in the Denny Triangle through TDC.

**Increases in non-residential density above base FAR would be contingent on including on-site housing.

FAR = floor area ratio. TDC = Transfer of Development Credits. DOC = Downtown Office Core.

DMC = Downtown Mixed Commercial. DMR/C = Downtown Mixed Residential/Commercial.

Bonus/TDR provisions. Under Alternative 3, current base FARs would remain for DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones and areas proposed to remain designated DMC. In DMC areas proposed for a DMR/C designation, the base FAR would be reduced from 5 to 1 or 2 FAR, depending on the height limit of the zone. In DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones, all floor area above the base FAR would be gained through bonuses and/or the transfer of development rights (TDR) according to a split requiring 75% of the additional floor area to be gained through affordable housing TDR, payment to an affordable housing/child care fund, and/or a bonus for providing affordable housing. The remaining 25% can be gained through other eligible bonuses or TDRs, including specified open space and on-site amenities, human services, open space TDR, variable scale TDR, and landmark TDR, within the limits and conditions prescribed in the Code. The provision that now allows a wider range of bonus choices to be used to gain the first FAR above the base FAR in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones would be eliminated. The DMC zone would continue to allow the option to use the newly adopted bonuses and TDR provisions establishing the 25%/75% split, or to use the bonus options available in this zone prior to this amendment. The DMR/C zone would have more options for gaining floor area above the base FAR, including gaining floor area according to the prescribed 25%/75% split, or through the use of available bonuses for on-site amenities and the full range of TDR choices.

ALTERNATIVE 4 – NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Overview

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing zoning and Land Use Code regulations would continue to apply for the foreseeable future. Projected economic growth would continue to generate demand for additional residential and nonresidential development in the City as well as the region. However, this alternative assumes no major changes would be made to further augment the zoned development capacity in the Denny Triangle or Commercial Core, or to increase or reduce the emphasis on particular uses beyond conditions established under current zoning. The general development pattern of a concentrated commercial core surrounded by less intensive mixed-use areas promoted under existing zoning would be maintained.

Current Height and Density Limits

The maximum allowable densities and mapped height limits would continue to apply, with the existing opportunities to gain additional height above these limits (see Figure 11). These include: 10% additional height in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones when prescribed measures are taken to control the overall bulk of a project; 20% additional height in DOC 1 and some DOC 2 areas with bulk controls and open space provision, landmark preservation or small-scale structures on-site; and up to 30% additional height for residential and mixed-use development through participation in the TDC programs in the Denny Triangle.

Bonus/TDR provisions. Under Alternative 4, in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones, there are two options for gaining floor area above the base FAR. One option allows additional floor area to be gained through bonuses and/or the transfer of development rights (TDR) according to a split that requires 75% of the additional floor area to be gained through affordable housing TDR, payment to an affordable housing/child care fund, and/or a bonus for providing affordable housing. The remaining 25% can be gained through other eligible bonuses or TDRs, including specified open space and on-site amenities, human services, open space TDR, variable scale TDR, and landmark TDR, within the limits and conditions prescribed in the Code. The other option allows a wider range of bonus choices to be used to gain the first FAR above the base FAR, with any additional floor area gains subject to the 25%/75% split.

In the DMC zone, developers have two choices for increasing floor area above the base FAR. The first is through the use the newly adopted bonuses and TDR provisions establishing the 25%/75% split. The other choice is to use the bonus options available prior to this amendment.



FIGURE 11

Alternative 4: No Action

Existing Regulations

1. OFFICE CORE
 - maximum FAR 14
 - 450' height limit with up to 20% increase allowed (540') under specified conditions
- 2a. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA
 - maximum FAR 10
 - 300' height limit with up to 30% increase allowed through TDC (390') in Denny Triangle or by 20% (360') under specified conditions
- 2b. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/NORTH DOWNTOWN
 - maximum FAR 10
 - 300' height limit with up to 30% increase through TDC (390') in Denny Triangle or by 10% (330') under specified conditions
3. OFFICE EXPANSION AREA/SOUTH DOWNTOWN
 - maximum FAR 10
 - 240' height limit with 20% increase (288') allowed under specified conditions.
4. COMMERCIAL MIXED USE AREAS
 - maximum FAR 7
 - 125', 160' and 240' height limits; 30% height increase allowed in Denny Triangle through TDC.



0 2 4 6 8 10
SCALE IN 100 FEET

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Table 5
Alternative 4—No Action

ID	Location	Zone	Maximum Density (FAR)	Maximum Height (feet)	
				Existing mapped limit	Optional height increases
1	Commercial core	DOC 1 – 450'	14	450 ft.	+20% w/bulk limits <u>and</u> open space, or landmark, small bldg. preservation.
2a	Denny Triangle—office expansion, 5 th to 8 th	DOC 2 – 300'	10	300 ft.	+20% as above, or +30% with TDC
2b	Denny Triangle—office expansion, transitioning east and west	DOC 2 – 300'	10	300 ft.	+10% with bulk limits, or +30% with TDC
	Belltown, office expansion, between 3 rd & 5th	DOC 2 – 300'	10	300 ft.	+10% with bulk limits
3	Commercial core—southern edge	DOC 2 – 240'	10	240 ft.	+20% w/bulk limits <u>and</u> open space or landmark, small bldg. preservation.
4	Denny Triangle—mixed use area	DMC – 125'	7	125 ft.	+30% with TDC
		DMC – 160'	7	160 ft.	+30% with TDC
		DMC – 240'	7	240 ft.	+30% with TDC
5	Commercial core—western edge	DMC – 125'	7	125 ft.	None
		DMC – 160'	7	160 ft.	None
		DMC – 240'	7	240 ft.	None
	Belltown—southern edge	DMC – 240'	7	240 ft.	None

Notes: Optional height/density increases are opportunities in the Land Use Code for additional height if certain conditions are met. FAR = floor area ratio. TDC = Transfer of Development Credits.

DOC = Downtown Office Core. DMC = Downtown Mixed Commercial.

**Table 6
Comparison of Alternatives**

Alternative 1-High End Height and Density Increases	Alternative 2 – Concentrated Office Core
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 135-foot height increase in DOC 1 and 100-foot increases in all Denny Triangle zones • 30% height increase in zones at edge of office and retail cores • 4 FAR maximum density increase in Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone and 3 FAR maximum density increase in other zones • 1 FAR increase in base FAR in DOC 1 zone and DOC 2 zones outside Denny Triangle; 2 FAR increase in base FAR in DMC zones and DOC 2 zone in Denny Triangle. • No TDC in Denny Triangle zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 and 135-foot height increases to the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones • 30% height increase only at southern edge of office core • 3 FAR maximum density increases in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones • No increase in base FAR • No height or density changes in western or northern DMC zones at periphery of the office/retail core • TDC limited to DMC zones in Denny Triangle
Alternative 3 – Residential Emphasis	Alternative 4 – No Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 135-foot height increase in DOC 1 and 100-foot increase in Denny Triangle DOC 2 between 5th/6th and 8th Avenues, west to Blanchard St. • No other height increases • 3 FAR maximum density increase in DOC 1 and same DOC 2 area described above • No increases in base FAR • Rezone Denny Triangle mixed use area between Westlake, Howell and Minor Ave. from DMC to DMR/C, lowering density from 7 FAR to 5 and 4. This re-oriens the zoning to mixed residential development. • Rezone Belltown southern edge from DMC to DMR/C, lowering density from 7 FAR to 5. • In other Denny Triangle and Commercial Core DMC zones, require the development of <u>non</u>-residential density (above the base) to be contingent upon including on-site housing. • TDC remains in all Denny Triangle zones except portion of DOC 2 with height and density increases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes in allowable height or density • Existing optional height increases would be available, through use of bulk limitations, use of TDC program, preservation of landmarks or small structures on-site, or provision of on-site open-space usable to public. • Optional height increases range from 10% to 30% above mapped height limits.

Source: SPO, 2002

Recent Regulatory Changes

In 2001, the City Council approved several changes to Downtown land use regulations, including changes to the system of obtaining bonuses, using transfer of development rights (TDR), options for obtaining additional height, and adjustments to base densities in some zones. This section summarizes these changes, for the information of the reader.

Downtown regulations continue to govern density in most zones by establishing a base and maximum floor area ratio (FAR), varying among the Downtown zones. The 2001 amendments fundamentally changed the system for increasing floor area above the base FAR and related development standards, including height provisions. The following is a summary of the major amendments:

PROVISIONS FOR HEIGHT INCREASES

An increase in height of up to 10% above current mapped height limits is allowed for occupied floor area in the Downtown Office Core 1 (DOC 1) and Downtown Office Core 2 (DOC 2) zones as a replacement for the sculptured building top bonus. A reduction in floor size for the upper portion of the structure is required to achieve a less bulky appearance, and the height increase does not permit increases in density beyond established maximum FAR limits. The 10% additional height allowed for unoccupied rooftop features is permitted above the 10% height gain.

A height increase of up to 20% in the DOC 1 zone and a limited portion of the DOC 2 zone is also now allowed to further promote less bulky development and to achieve enhanced conditions at the street level of tall structures. In addition to the reduction in floor size for the upper portion of the tower, special conditions are required at the street level, including the provision of open space, low-scale structures and/or preservation of a landmark structure on the development site.

CHANGES TO DENSITY LIMITS

Maximum FAR Limits. There were no increases to maximum FAR limits. In the DRC zone, the maximum FAR was reduced from 6 FAR to 5 FAR.

Base FAR Limits. Permitted base FARs were increased in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones by 1 FAR, and by 0.5 FAR in the DRC zone. These changes re-establish a graduated range of base FARs reflecting a land use pattern that focuses greatest density on the Downtown office core in the DOC 1 zone, with the next greatest density permitted in the DOC 2 zone. Increases in the base FAR also offset the elimination of floor area bonuses previously allowed for required features, such as sidewalk widening. In the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones, the first FAR above the base FAR can still be gained by providing a variety of on-site amenities, such as street-level retail shopping uses, short-term parking, and public open space features.

CHANGE TO BONUS/TDR PROVISIONS

The original incentive provisions allowed incremental increases in floor area above the base FAR through the use of certain types of bonuses or by acquiring development rights from eligible properties that could be transferred to the development site (TDR). Under this system, use of housing bonuses and TDR from affordable housing structures was reserved for the uppermost increments needed to reach the maximum FAR.

Under the new provisions, the maximum FAR can be achieved in several ways, including:

- Transfer of development rights (TDR);
- Floor area bonuses when certain impacts of development are mitigated by voluntary agreements to provide or contribute to housing and child care (“facilities bonus”); or
- Floor area bonuses when certain impact-mitigating features are provided (“amenity bonuses”).

The bonus and TDR options have been re-prioritized under the amended provisions to focus on mitigation of housing impacts. In DOC-1 and DOC-2, seventy-five percent (75%) of any floor area above 1 FAR above the base FAR must be earned by TDR transferred from qualified housing sites or by facilities bonuses that involve mitigation of housing and child care impacts. Twenty-five percent of the floor area above 1 FAR above the base FAR must be earned from other (non-housing) development rights transfers or amenity bonuses, or both. Five percent (one-fifth of the 25%) must be achieved through TDR from Landmark structures when available. In DRC, the 75%-25% split would be applied to all chargeable floor area above the base FAR.

Some bonus features, including major performing arts theaters, sculptured building tops, and major retail stores, have been eliminated.

The first FAR above the base in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones can be gained through by using amenity bonuses, including short-term parking and retail uses, or non-housing TDR. In DMC zones, floor area increases above the base FAR can be gained by using one of two options: a) the rules governing floor area in general and for gaining bonus floor area that applied prior to the amended provisions, or b) the newer bonus and exemption rules described above.

CHANGES TO TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR) OPTIONS

The use of TDR continues to allow the unused base density permitted on a site to be transferred to other sites within the same block or transferred between blocks from eligible sites in some areas of Downtown to other areas. Transfers continue to be permitted from sites developed with landmark structures and from sites with housing for households with incomes up to 80% of median income, provided a minimum amount of housing for households with incomes up to 50% of median income is included. The area where landmarks are eligible as TDR sending sites was expanded to include zones north of Virginia Street to Denny Way. Transfers are no longer permitted from Pioneer Square infill sites, from sites occupied by new housing or from new or existing performing arts facilities (except landmarks).

A new provision allows for the transfer of development rights from sites provided as Downtown public open spaces, subject to special conditions. All transfers are subject to limitations, some of them new (for example, in many areas a lower FAR is used to calculate floor area available to transfer from sending sites).

CHANGES TO RETAIL CORE PROVISIONS

The use of specific bonus features and conditional use approval is no longer required for structures to exceed the 85-foot base height up to the maximum height of 150 feet. Certain types of mixed-use development that include residential use or a minimum amount of retail and/or entertainment uses are permitted up to the maximum height of 150 feet without additional conditions. In addition, up to 30% more height is permitted on two half-blocks along the western edge of the retail core on the east side of 2nd Avenue between Pine and Union Streets.